DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 321 895 PS 018 966

TITLE How To Help Your Child Learn. A Handbook for Parents. Parent Participation for Effective Schools.
INSTITUTION Arizona State Dept. of Education, Phoenix.
PUB DATE Sep 89
NOTE 45p.; For related documents, see PS 018 967-969.
PUB TYPE Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Academic Achievement; Elementary Secondary Education; Guidelines; *Parent Influence; *Parent Participation; Parent Responsibility; *Parent Role; *Parents as Teachers; Resource Materials; Self Concept; Self Esteem; *Student Characteristics

ABSTRACT

The aim of this handbook is to help parents gain insights into: (1) the ways in which children learn; (2) basic skills children need for success in school; and (3) the importance of helping children develop a strong self-concept. Other topics include a rationale for parent participation in their children's learning, ideas to enhance creative thinking, parental rights and responsibilities, ways of encouraging regular attendance at school, homework, ways to use television wisely, and the importance of using newspapers and magazines as resources. References, a bibliography, and lists of materials available from the Home and School Institute and the National Committee for Citizens in Education are provided. (RH)

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Printed in Phoenix, Arizona
by the
Arizona Department of Education
Total Copies Printed.....500
Total Printing Cost.....$430.00
Unit Printing Cost.....$.86
Date of Printing.....10/89

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I dreamed I stood in a studio, and watched two sculptors there.
The clay they used was a young child's mind and they fashioned it with care.
One was a teacher; the tools he used were books, music, and art.
One was a parent who worked with a guiding hand and gentle, loving heart.
Day after day the teacher toiled with a touch that was deft and sure;
While the parent labored by his side and polished and smoothed it o'er.
And when at last their task was done, they were proud of what they had wrought.
For the things they had molded into the child could neither be sold nor bought.
And each agreed that he would have failed if he had worked alone.
For behind the teacher stood the school and behind the parent, the home.

-Author Unknown

INTRODUCTION

Parents are the child's first teacher. When the first words are spoken the parent is the language teacher. When a parent helps the child recognize shapes and colors they are teaching reading skills. Before a child goes to kindergarten the parent has taught math, science, social studies, arts and physical education. Teachers only see students a few hours per day. Parents are constantly teaching their children.

The child's success in school depends upon what parents do before the child enters school and what they do during the child's school years. Parents provide the motivation and practice for continued learning. A teacher can only influence a child for one year, but parents influence a child for almost twenty years. In fact, the parent's influence extends for the rest of the child's life.

Parents need to work in partnership with the schools to help the child achieve his/her potential. Nearly all parents are willing to assist their children with school work, but many are uncertain what to do. Through this handbook and its accompanying seminar, parents will gain insights into how children learn, basic skills needed for success in school and the importance of building a strong self concept. Television, homework, parental rights and responsibilities are also addressed. Suggestions for learning activities which may be done at home, while shopping, or traveling comprise the remainder of the handbook.

This handbook is one part of "Parent Participation for Effective Schools Program" developed by the Arizona Department of Education. Two additional handbooks, distributed during seminars on Parent Participation, are Planning for Parent Participation (for administrators, teachers and parent advisory groups) and Parent-Teacher Communication (for parents and teachers). For information about the handbooks and/or seminars, contact:

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PARENT PARTICIPATION: DOES IT MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

Many research studies in recent years have found a strong connection between parent participation in the child's education and student achievement. Joyce Epstein reported, "The evidence is clear that parental encouragement, activities, and interest at home and parental participation in schools and classrooms positively influence achievement, even after the student's ability and family socioeconomic status are taken into account. Students gain in personal and academic development if their families emphasize schooling, let the children know they do, and do so continually over the school years." (Epstein, 1985) Another researcher stated, ". . .the evidence is beyond dispute: parent involvement improves student achievement. When parents are involved, children do better in school, and they go to better schools." (Henderson, 1987)

"Children, whose parents help them at home and stay in touch with the school, score higher than children of similar aptitude and family background whose parents are not involved. Schools where children are failing improve dramatically when parents are called in to help." (Henderson, 1987) "The most successful students are those whose parents become actively engaged in the educational process,. . .at home, but. . .at school as well." (Williams, 1986)

This involvement continues to be important throughout the school years. "A 1985 report strongly suggests that parent involvement and support of education are critical at the secondary level. Students whose parents closely monitor their academic progress and their general whereabouts do significantly better in school. This is true for all families, regardless of income." (The National PTA, 1986) "Older children, whose progress starts to wobble, can be straightened out by home reinforcement techniques, where parents reward good performance." (Henderson, 1987)

"A HUNDRED YEARS FROM NOW
IT WILL NOT MATTER
WHAT MY BANK ACCOUNT WAS,
THE SORT OF HOUSE I LIVED IN,
OR THE KIND OF CAR I DROVE—
BUT THE WORLD MAY BE DIFFERENT
BECAUSE I WAS IMPORTANT
IN THE LIFE OF A CHILD."

From Parents Anonymous,
Summer, 1987

LEARNING SKILLS CHILDREN NEED WHICH PARENTS CAN HELP THEM DEVELOP

Children Learn By Doing

Children learn by doing; so give them many opportunities to learn at home by doing something new. Young children can help the parent prepare meals. Older children can try new recipes. Let children use simple mechanical tools and learn to follow directions for household chores. Whether mixing paint or checking the oil, get the child involved.

Take trips (even if it is walking around the block) and talk about what you see. Point out the wonders of nature and help the child to train his/her eyes to "see." Walk or stroll around the neighborhood, park, fields, woods, etc. Teach him/her to read picture labels and then the words. Children will learn a wealth of words as make these experiences fun and learning activities.

Go fly a kite! Watch a butterfly flit among the flowers, watch the birds fly through the air. Examine a discarded nest. Smell the flowers. Watch an ant bed working and building. Read about these wonders of nature and give your children a glimpse into these miracles. Talk about the world of plants and animals and all the world of nature. Read many books to your children. Read about people, places, and things in the world around them and about places they cannot go. Make reading a part of your home life.

Encourage children to use their senses. Talk with your child about differences in feel, smell, taste, sight, and sound. Use descriptive words and let the child make comparisons: soft as a kitten, smooth as satin, gritty as sand.

Let children try their own way of doing things, even when you know a simpler way. You may know how to multiply, but the child uses repeated addition to make three times as many cookies as the recipe.

Give children time to practice whatever they are learning. No one becomes accomplished at anything with a few tries. Cooking, helping with the car maintenance, and straightening up their rooms are all helpful tasks, but ones which require repetition, thinking, and time to get better at the job.

Be pleased and proud if your children are inquisitive and interested and want to know things. Answer the questions as patiently and intelligently as you can—on their level, but no "talking down" to them. Of course, you will not know all the answers; but you can help them find the answers in books at home or elsewhere. Help establish the "let us find out" attitude at a young age. Remember the ancient Chinese proverb that says,

"Tell me,
I forgot.
Show me,
I remember.
Involve me,
I understand."

Repetition helps nail it down! Stretch the imagination! Reach beyond the here and now of reality. (Kelley, n.d.)

Listening Skills

Paying close attention and careful listening are essential to learning. Parents can help their children develop listening skills with the following strategies:

- Listen to Your Child. A youngster who feels that her/his own ideas, thoughts, and feelings are valued will be more open to parents' and teachers' ideas, thoughts, and feelings. That is why giving your attention is the first rule of getting her/his.

- Make Eye Contact. Even a baby will know you mean business if you look him/her right in the eye as you speak.

- Be as Clear as Possible. To help a child heed your words, it makes sense to ask yourself, "Have I done all I could to make myself understood?"

- Lower Volume, Adjust Tone. Children get louder when adults do so speak softly. Getting kids to listen is more than what you say; it is also "how" you say it. The most important thing for a parent to remember is to put warmth into her/his voice.

- Mean What You Say, Say What You Mean. Unfulfilled promises and threats undermine a child's confidence in what he/she hears you say and whether it is to be believed. When Andrew's mother says for the umpteenth time, "Stop pushing your brother down or I will send you to your room," and then does not follow through, Andrew gets a clear if unspoken message: Mommy's words are empty.

- Do Not Lecture. "I wish I could talk to my dad," says 12-year-old Lisa. "But whenever I ask him something, he launches into this big long thing that goes on and on and on. The other day I was trying to talk to him about all the homework I have to do and he gave me this big sermon about how it was good for me and I should just do it, because that is what he did when he was my age." Unhappily, unless things change soon, Lisa will probably stop approaching her father and will begin to tune him out.

- Be Positive. There was a big puddle in the school yard that two lines of grade-schoolers had to cross to return to the school building after recess. One teacher said to her pupils as each reached the water, "Do not step in the puddle!" The other teacher said to each child, "Jump!" In the first group there were several pair of wet feet, in the second, none. The point: it is far easier to "do" something than "not do" something else.

- Time for Talk. In lots of families, the members do not talk to each other enough. Stimulate conversation by bringing in new information and ideas. You plan a menu for dinner, why not plan some interesting things to talk about as well? With a bit of forethought you can have discussions, not just announcements. Show interest in your child' school work. Talk about what happened at school.

- Use "I-Messages" rather than "You-Messages." This means phrasing things in terms of what you want and feel, instead of dictating a solution to your child or accusing her/him of something. An example might be rather than saying, "You are being a pest," say "I am tired and I do not want to play now."

- A Time for Quiet. In families in which kids are already tuning parents out, we encourage parents to turn things around by spending time doing pleasurable things with their children. Setting aside this time to sit with your child and express affection creates a warm environment that enhances your better-listening plan.

- Do Not Let Problems Go. The hardest communication problem to deal with is when the family has fallen into a rut. They say the same old things to each other, often hurtful things. They have stopped listening to each other because they are sure the others do not have anything valuable to say. The parent says, "You really have to do your homework now," and the child says, "Yeah, yeah, I have heard that one before."

- Be Aware of "Kid Rules." Children spend a great deal of time at school and with their friends; that world is as real to them as their world at home with their parents. Sometimes translation from one world to another makes for misunderstandings.

(Parents Anonymous, December, 1986.)

Thinking Skills

Learning and studying are thinking. Parents need to encourage their children to think, rather than telling them everything to do. For example, "We have six people coming for dinner; how much rice will we need?" For young children, counting out the right number of dishes is a thinking task.

Thinking skills parents can help children learn are:

- Sort and Classify. Have your child sort household items such as toys, laundry, groceries into various groups. For older children, hobbies such as stamp, matchbook, and coin collections help to develop this skill. Talk with the child about why he/she grouped the items in a particular way.

- Problem Solving at His/Her Level. Help children develop a good system for solving problems. A typical one helps the child to (1) understand the problem, (2) design a plan to solve it, (3) carry out the plan, and (4) decide whether the plan worked.

- Planning a Task and Following it Through. For a young child, ask her/him to tell you the steps in getting dressed before putting on clothes. Older children can describe the steps in baking a cake, preparing a meal, cleaning their room, or building a shop project. See that the project is completed.

- Evaluating Information. Teach your child to ask the following questions about a statement: (1) Is it unusual? (2) Is it common knowledge, (e.g., "the sky is sometimes blue")? (3) If it is not, what is the proof? (4) If there is proof, is it reliable? If the anser to 4 is "no," then the statement is unsubstantiated.

- Setting Goals. Encourage your child to set goals, stating what he/she wants to achieve within a certain amount of time. This gives him/her a sense of accomplishment. Urge your child to put the goals in writing, to constantly imagine themselves meeting the goals, and to review and update them occasionally.

(Adapted from Maxwell, January, 1987; Miller, 1982; and Raines, 1982.)

Language Skills

Important to a child's success in school and in life is the ability to verbally express him/herself. Parents can assist the child in developing this ability by carrying on a conversation with the child. Talk with your child regularly and get him/her to talk to you. Talk about the activities in which your child is engaged, about their thoughts and feelings.

Learning by doing is especially important in this area. Children learn by example from their parents, therefore, parents should express themselves clearly, using correct pronunciation and grammar. Children also need to understand body language since parents and teachers use this means, as well as words, to communicate.

Number Skills

One of the reasons some children have difficulty with arithmetic is that they may lack sufficient concrete experiences with numbers and counting. Parents can assist by providing many experiences as part of daily life in using numbers. For example, use the child's toys to teach the child to count. "This is one truck, two dolls", etc. When traveling play counting games—count cars, trucks, bridges, billboards, etc. (The activity books for the various grade levels contain several suggestions for counting and number activities.)

Children need an understanding of time, not only how to read a clock, but how long is a given amount of time. Give a child a task to complete in a certain amount of time. When he/she finishes it in the time allowed, praise the child.

Social Skills

A child's interest in and enthusiasm for school can be greatly influenced by how well he/she gets along with classmates and the teacher. Help your child to learn how to get along with others by being a good role model in your relations with other people. Teach your child to take turns, to say, "Please" and "Thank You," and to be considerate of others.

IDEAS TO ENHANCE CREATIVE THINKING

"Network," published by the National Committee for Citizens in Education, October 1985, included an article by Cathy Collins. Ms. Collins listed suggestions for home activities to help develop your child's creativity. They also make good brain teasers to help pass the time on a long trip. They are appropriate for most school-age children and adults.

1. Picture an animal with all of its features. Think of a different animal. Combine the characteristics of both to form a new animal. Tell why this animal could or could not survive in today's world.

2. Cut a pie or large circle into eight pieces with only three cuts.

3. Brainstorm as many things as you can think of that are solid; then flexible; then soft. What has all three characteristics?

4. Think of three ways to use a paper plate to stop a robbery.

5. Pick a number that is significant to you and tell why.

6. Select one of the following and tell how you would improve it: bicycle, electric pencil sharpener, shower, hair dryer, coat, telephone, or shoe.

7. What do elephants wish to be and why?

8. Change the ending of a movie and tell why it is better than the original.

9. Imagine that rain is hard, red and square, and that each drop could carry on a conversation with its closest drop. How would these differences change the world? How could rain develop such attributes?

You can think of similar activities. They should incorporate the concepts of incompleteness, open-endedness, exploring, spontaneous expression, experiments and hypotheses that can be modified and retested, practice in sensing gaps or identifying missing elements and analogies to nature. (Collins, 1986)

BUILDING A CHILD'S SELF-ESTEEM

An important key to a child's success in school and in life is the child's self-esteem. One of the most important things a parent can do to help a child in school is to build the child's self-esteem.

What Is Self-Esteem?

Self-esteem is a child's (or an adult's) opinion of his/her worth. People with high self-esteem feel that they are capable, worthwhile, lovable persons. They display self-confidence, set and strive to attain goals, take responsibility, and make good decisions. Although they are proud of their accomplishments, people with high self-esteem are not braggarts, nor do they exhibit a sense of superiority. Often, they are creative because they will take risks needed to meet new challenges and to be successful.

A child with low self-esteem may feel unloved, isolated, and defenseless. They see themselves as powerless to get what they want from life. These children may be withdrawn and passive. They are also more susceptible to peer pressure, and it may be more difficult for them to say, "NO!" to drugs, alcohol, and sex.

Studies have shown that a student with high intelligence, but low self-esteem may do poorly in school while a child with average intelligence but high self-esteem may excel. Not all students with high grades possess high self-esteem. Some students become obsessed with earning high grades in order to win approval and prove their self-worth.

How To Tell If Your Child Has High Self-Esteem

Does your child have:

- a strong interest in developing skills and abilities?
- a genuine interest in and concern for others?
- ability to think independently and make independent choices?
- self-confidence?
- a high level of self-direction?

Does your child display these characteristics?

- Feels liked, wanted, and accepted.
- Enjoys life with enthusiasm.
- Assumes responsibility for own life.
- Expresses feelings easily.
- Can admit mistakes without feeling ashamed or excessively guilty.
- Can be alone without feeling lonely.
- Approaches life with trust and optimism.
- Does not need continual praise and reassurance.

Signs Of Low Self-Esteem

Children with low self-esteem may exhibit the following behaviors:

- Fearful and timid—The child is very insecure in new situations, and very uncomfortable in social situations.

- Bullying and bragging—This is often a mask for deep feelings of inferiority and/or low self-esteem.
- Unable to make decisions—If past decisions were ridiculed or rebuked or role models were unable to make up their minds, the child may become very unsure of decisions.
- Expects failure—Every activity is greeted by this child with, "I cannot do it" or "It is too hard." It may have started as a result of a series of failures or as a bid to gain attention.
- Reluctant to express opinions—This child may display a passive personality and seem uninterested in the world around him or her. The child does indeed have an opinion but is unwilling or unable to express it.

(The previous sections were adapted from Nelson, 1983; P.T.A. 1987; Stixrud, 1987; The Development of Self-Image, n.d.)

How Parents Can Help Build A Child's Self-Esteem

1. Provide a daily dose of unconditional love. This means loving each child as he is, no matter what he says, thinks, feels, or does. Being loved unconditionally is not enough for high self-esteem, but it is absolutely necessary. Children who feel pressured to be different than they are develop the idea that they are not, and never can be, good enough.

2. Set aside time to give each child your undivided attention, without teaching, scolding, or "improving" her in any way. Thirty minutes before bedtime is a particularly "impressionable" period. Listen to what your child is saying and feeling. Respect her right to have strong feelings about events.

3. Develop a child's sense of belonging to family, community, and school.

   - Share your feelings, interests, and hobbies. Let the child know that her interests, too, are valued by the family.

   - Strengthen family ties. Keep a picture of the whole family by the child's bed where he will be reminded daily that he has a place in the family, also. Teach children about their past and about yours.

   - Set rules and regulations that emphasize family unity. Insisting, for example, that "in this family we build each other up, not tear each other down," can have startling results.

   - Develop procedures for resolving conflicts. Many families find the "family council" approach very useful for this purpose.

   - Give each child her own physical space in the home, even if it is only a shelf or a corner of a room shared with a sibling. Decisions about what to keep in this space or how to keep it should be made by the child. A child should have her own seat at the table, too, so that there will be an obvious "hole" if she misses a meal.

4. Increase your child's responsibility and power.

   - Teach choice. Tell your child, life does not just "happen to you," but rather is a "do it yourself" proposition. Your own actions contribute to outcomes that make a difference. Help children become aware of how they make decisions and how their choosing could be improved, without resorting to an "I told you so"

approach. Perhaps most importantly, teach children that they are responsible for what they feel, that they cannot blame others for their feelings.

- Teach social competence. Teach children to influence others in a positive way. Insist upon good manners, and set a good example by using them yourself.

- Teach the importance of participating and earning one's keep. Even a toddler can carry the waste basket to the door. Working for or toward something they want, thereby earning it, contributes enormously to helping children learn responsibility.

- Never do for a child what he can do for himself. There are exceptions, of course, such as when he is ill. Limiting his amount of television viewing also helps, because he then must rely more on his own resourcefulness to entertain himself. You will be pleasantly surprised to learn what your child can do when you provide the proper kinds of help, supervision, encouragement, and training. For example, allow her to select her own clothing for the day; have her keep her room straight and make her bed each morning. Each year try to increase the amount of freedom and responsibility.

- Help your child experience success. Break difficult tasks into small steps, and offer help and encouragement. Focus on a child's strengths and aptitudes. Encourage your child to take on increasingly challenging tasks and responsibilities and (within limits) to take risks. Help children set their own goals and devise plans for their accomplishment.

- Avoid criticism, comparison, and competition. Destructive criticism cripples children more than physical handicap does. Criticism is almost never effective in improving behavior and almost always leads to anger and resentment. Of course, parents should point the way to better behavior and be firm in discipline. But there are better ways to accomplish these things. Comparing a child to others is also often harmful to a sense of competence and power. Competition (especially among siblings) frequently breeds feelings of inferiority in the loser and guilt in the winner.

- Help a child to see himself as capable and strong. Praise often—notice when a child feels good about himself and say, "You feel good because of _____." Build on your child's strengths, not his weaknesses. Center your child's attention upon what he does well, express your confidence in his ability, give encouragement.

- Respect a child's uniqueness. It is extremely important to inspire children about their own potential. Look for and acknowledge ways in which your child has a special approach to a task, for example.

- Discipline wisely. An effective system of discipline allows a parent to manage a child's behavior without having to resort to anger, yelling, or manipulation—all of which can damage your parent-child relationship. Learn to reprimand the deed and not the doer. "It is not you, it is what you did."

- Be realistic in demands. Let a child know what is coming up so he can finish his activity and get ready. Help the child to succeed in his tasks.

- Set high but reasonable expectations. Expect the child to do well, to be cooperative and to behave responsibly. Children usually behave according to the

parents' spoken or unspoken expectations. Your child will feel much more confident in attempting something if he believes you have full confidence in his ability to succeed.

5. Assess your own self-esteem.

   - One of the most powerful ways parents help their children's self-esteem is by building their own. Parents with low self-esteem tend to have trouble facilitating self-worth in their children. One way to build your own self-esteem and your child's perception of you as a self-confident person is to become involved in school activities. Studies show that children whose parents attend parent group meetings regard their parents and themselves more. In other words, self-esteem "rubs off!"

   - Some additional ways to build your self-esteem are to:

     - Consciously, on purpose, do something good for yourself every day.
     - Accept that you will have down days and do not look at these as being "failures" in your efforts to increase your self-esteem. When feeling down, ask "What am I telling myself?"
     - Accept complete responsibility for your own well-being: take charge of your life. This includes: thoughts, actions, feelings.
     - Learn to say "no" without feeling guilty or selfish. If you never say "no," what is your "yes" worth?
     - Take risks. Start small—go slowly. Increase gradually.
     - Love yourself and others—unconditionally.
     - Avoid or quit trying to control the universe.
     - Believe in yourself and try to become all that you have the potential to become.

   (The items in the previous section were adapted from Bradwell, 1982; Bruning, 1987; P.T.A., 1987; POPS' INK, 1985)

ACTIVITY SUGGESTIONS FOR PARENTS:

1. What are five specific things you can do to help build your child's self-esteem?

2. Give an example of something you can do to build your self-esteem.

From **The Power of Positive Students**
by Dr. William Mitchell

"I got two A's" the small boy said.
His voice was filled with glee.
His father very bluntly asked,
"Why didn't you get three?"

"Mom I've got the dishes done,"
The girl called from the door.
Her mother very calmly said,
"Did you sweep the floor?"

"I mowed the grass," the tall boy said,
"And put the mower away,"
His father asked him with a shrug,
"Did you clean off all the clay?"

The children in the house next door
Seemed happy and content.
The same things happened over there,
But this is how it went:

"I got two A's," the small boy said,
His voice was filled with glee,
His father proudly said, "That's great;
I'm glad you belong to me."

"Mom I've got the dishes done,"
The girl called from the door.
Her mother smiled and softly said,
"Each day I love you more."

"I've mowed the grass," the tall boy said,
"And put the mower away."
His father answered with much joy,
"You've made my happy day."

Children deserve a little praise
for tasks they're asked to do,
If they're to lead a happy life,
So much depends on you.

PARENTAL RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO EXPECT . . . . .

- to be informed of available student services.
- to be informed of potentially serious problems of any kind relative to your child, as soon as possible.
- to be able to call the school office and determine whether your child is in attendance during any given day.
- to be informed in advance when any extraordinary activities (exclusive of regular curriculum) involving your child are to occur.
- to have access to information regarding all services/programs available to your child and to see any and all instructional materials on request.
- to discuss in a constructive manner with school officials any possible change of class assignment due to personality or other conflicts.
- that the school administrator will be flexible in arranging conferences regarding your child so that all concerned parties may attend.
- that school personnel will maintain a responsive, positive and professional attitude toward your child and toward any effort on your part to communicate in a constructive manner with them regarding your child.
- that the school district shall have adopted a reasonable and consistent policy on discipline.
- that high schools can and will continue to meet standards of accreditation set forth by proper authorities.
- that your child is in a classroom where consistent, reasonable control is maintained at all times in a safe environment.
- that your child will receive an education of the highest quality the district can afford.

YOU HAVE THE LEGAL RIGHT TO . . . . .

- visit the school and classes, and meet with teachers, as long as the appropriate arrangements are made through the principal's office and you do not interfere with school operations.
- look at your child's school records. If you believe the contents of any record are untrue, inaccurate, or misleading, you are entitled to a hearing to correct or delete any such data. In addition, you are entitled to insert into such records a written explanation with respect to the content.
- expect that your child's educational records are not released by the school to any individual, agency or organization without your written consent. There are legitimate

exceptions such as 1) in case of emergency to protect the health and safety of your child and others: 2) officials of the same school who have a legitimate education interest or: 3) officials of other schools to which the student has applied or transferred, and others as provided for by Federal Law Section 99.31 of P.L. 93-380.

- look at all official school policies.
- see instructional materials used in research programs funded by H.E.W. and the National Science Foundation.
- be present and represent your child at any hearing regarding the child's suspension. A parent of a suspended child may appeal the suspension by written application to the Board of Education.
- have your handicapped child placed in an "appropriate" public school program. Parents must also be consulted about the evaluation and placement of their handicapped child. Parents of handicapped children should address themselves to state law (A.R.S. 15-761 et seq. and federal law 20 U.S.C. 1401 et seq.)
- appeal to H.E.W. when students are prevented from effective participation in their education because they cannot speak or understand the language. (Civil Rights Act Title VI, 1964) (Equal Education Opportunity Act, 1974)
- educate your child at home, providing you meet the conditions set by the State of Arizona and the County School Superintendent.
- request approval for your child to be excused from studying subjects or participating in school activities which you object to on religious, moral or other reasonable grounds.
- expect the School District to adequately supervise and protect your child while transported in a school bus and while in attendance at school activities. (If the child leaves the school grounds or school bus without proper permission, the School District is no longer responsible.)

YOU HAVE THE RESPONSIBILITY TO . . . . .

- be concerned with the quality of education your child receives.
- determine what services/programs are available for your child.
- be aware of legislation and statutes (federal, state, local) pertaining to public education.
- conduct any visit to the school or classroom in a manner which is not disruptive to the educational procedure.
- maintain appropriate communication with school personnel regarding your child.
- notify the school of any unusual behavior patterns or circumstances relative to the child (in or out of school) as soon as possible.
- COMMUNICATE WITH THE CHILD. Be aware of the child's social/academic progress and physical presence at school.

- inform the school immediately when the child will be absent.
- meet the emotional, social and physical needs of your child insofar as possible, and convey to the child certain standards of socially acceptable behavior/appropriate self-discipline.
- provide a home environment and emotional climate conducive to good study habits and educational progress.
- motivate the child and expose him/her to as many extracurricular educational experiences and career choices as possible.
- support reasonable and sensible corrective measures taken by the school.
- make some effort, insofar as possible, to be involved or assist in meeting current needs of the school, i.e. school-parent group activities, library/office aides, class trips and classroom volunteers, sports, other areas as needed/requested.
- support school-community functions insofar as possible.

"Being a quality parent is not an easy task. Providing quality education is not an easy task. Parents and schools working together can produce quality.

IT IS WORTH THE EFFORT!"

When a child learns the basic skills necessary to obtain employment and survive as a competent citizen in his time, then that child may be said to have had a GOOD education.

When a child knows that his parents and his teachers CARE about him as a worthwhile individual, truly BELIEVE IN his ability and EXPECT him to achieve to his fullest potential:

When learning is, for the most part, exciting and meaningful for the child, and he carries that interest and attitude of inquiry throughout life:

When he is employable and successful in his chosen field:

When he is able to make independent decisions based on appropriate facts, act upon those decisions and communicate his ideas with confidence:

Then that child has had a QUALITY education.

Quality education happens only when parents, teachers, and the community at large work closely together to make it happen! (Tucson Unified School District)

ENCOURAGE YOUR CHILD TO ATTEND SCHOOL REGULARLY

Regular attendance is an important part of our educational system. Parents need to understand the important role they play in helping foster good attendance habits.

When a child is absent from school, that child misses a day of learning. And since each day's learning builds upon previous information, understanding and skills, it is essential that children attend school regularly.

As a parent, you can help your children adopt a good attitude about school and to look upon attendance as an important part of their education. School truancy has been shown to be directly related to problem behavior, including violence, employment problems and disciplinary problems later in life. It's up to you, as a parent, to prevent this from happening.

Most schools have an attendance policy. While those policies may differ from school to school, the objectives behind every attendance policy are basically the same:

- Offering a good educational program with a balance between teaching and classroom participation.
- Helping students develop a sense of responsibility, discipline, and good work habits.
- Giving the student a better chance to succeed, both academically and socially.
- Keeping the lines of communication open between home and school so that parents and teachers, together, can sustain regular school attendance.

To meet these objectives, attendance must be looked upon as necessary and important. For most children, communication with parents and a cooperative home—school environment are the most effective means of achieving and maintaining good attendance.

Ten Ways to Help Your Child Attend Regularly

1. Be responsible for notifying the school each day your child is absent.
2. Don't keep your child home from school for minor ailments, especially if he or she has a poor attendance record.
3. Show an active interest in your child's activities, both in and out of school. Stress the idea of school as a beneficial experience.
4. Encourage your child to develop good personal habits that deal with time schedules for getting to bed, getting up, leaving for school, etc.
5. Be aware of the school's attendance policy, and the consequences of nonattendance.
6. Compliment your children on their accomplishments. If they feel they're succeeding, they'll want to attend.
7. Refuse to write false excuses for your children.
8. Encourage your child to get involved in clubs and activities, to increase their interest in school.
9. Discuss your children's school day with them. Keep the lines of communication open.
10. Participate in school activities yourself, such as PTA, parent-teacher conferences, open house, and school programs. (Attendance, n.d.)

THE PARENT PLEDGE

- I want my child to have the best possible education and I realize that strong school systems are essential.
- I will provide a home environment that will encourage my child to learn.
- I will help my child build a small but meaningful home library.
- I will insist that all homework assignments are done each night.
- I will discuss at dinner time what my child has learned at school each day.
- I will include stimulating books among the presents I give my child.
- I will review newspaper stories and TV newscasts with my child and discuss how the news may affect our lives.
- I will meet regularly with my child's teachers.
- I will remind my child of the necessity of discipline in the classroom—especially self-discipline.
- I will help my child appreciate and enjoy the excitement in learning and the thrill of an inquiring mind.

The pledge above was published in the Wall Street Journal by United Technologies Corporation, Hartford, Connecticut 06101. (Attendance, n.d.)

HOMEWORK

The research on effective schools repeatedly shows that teachers who assigned homework have students with higher achievement scores, especially if teachers grade or comment on it. In addition to improving academic performance, teachers, principals and parents see homework as a means of developing self-discipline and independent study habits. Another benefit of homework is that it leads to communication between the home and the school. Now, how can parents help their children with homework? The following suggestions may help to reduce homework hassles.

A. Inform your child of the following facts regarding homework:

1. Homework is part of your job of going to school; it is your responsibility.
2. No matter how much you "don't feel like" doing homework, it does not go away.
3. Homework is a fact of life for the student.
4. The amount of homework you have to do will increase as you reach high school.
5. Homework does affect your grade. The natural consequences of not doing homework is failure.
6. There is no occupation that does not require self-discipline. Right now school is your occupation and homework is part of your required self-discipline.

CONCLUSION: Homework is a fact, not a feeling, and it is not going to go away. So the sooner you accept your responsibility in doing homework the sooner things will improve.

B. Establish a good home—learning environment:

To create the proper atmosphere for learning at home, all you need is a dash of initiative and interest. Learning together can become an enjoyable part of your family's life-style. Here are a few tried and true tips:

Set regular times to do homework.

Study hour should be the same hour every night. Whether your child must use the hour right after school or later in the evening is up to what best fits into your family and your child's after school activities. Again, consistency in establishing the hour and sticking to it will decide whether the study hour becomes a habit or not.

It may be helpful to set up a homework schedule with your child. Write down all of the time necessary for completing daily activities. Then determine when the child

prefers to complete homework assignments. A contract, such as follows may be useful:

I, Bobby, agree to do my homework from 5:30 until 6:00 p.m., and from 7:00 until 8:00 p.m. during the school week beginning Monday, February 4.

I agree not to talk on the telephone or watch television during these times.

_____ (Parent signs as witness)

_____ (Child signs)

The study hour should be observed whether or not your child has a specific assignment. This will eliminate the child saying, "I do not have any homework," when he/she really does. Many courses have extra credit work that can be done and of course, there is always review of past work and studying for tests.

The place where your child does his/her homework needs to be a special place, with as few distractions as possible. Some kids work best in their room, others the kitchen table. Both places have their positive and negative points. In their room they are not so easily monitored as far as staying on task is concerned. Therefore, a fifteen minute assignment can turn into an hour's worth of work. But usually, the distractions can be held to a minimum.

At the kitchen table you can casually monitor progress and praise when appropriate. It is also helpful for some children to work where others are around because they fight the isolation from the rest of the family rather than just the homework.

If your child as a toddler brought his/her toys into the living room to play with while you read the newspaper, he is probably a kitchen table candidate.

Wherever your child does his/her homework, a desk, table, sturdy chair, good lighting and no distractions like TV, radio, stereo or other family members are considerations.

Having all the material necessary to complete the assignments eliminates the need to stop and start, to accumulate and find and sharpen. This, in turn, eliminates the job of getting started again or being sidetracked and never returning to the task at hand.

SUGGESTED LIST OF MATERIALS

Textbooks
Assignment Book
Pencils (sharpened)
Erasers
Pens
Paper
Dictionary

ADDITIONAL AIDS

Thesaurus
Calculator
Ruler
Typewriter
Compass
Protractor
Timer

Keep track of assignments.

Perhaps you can keep track of what you have to do without some form of reminder, but as for me, if it is not written down, it is likely to be forgotten. Help your child see the connection between what you use as a reminder and what he uses to keep track of his/her assignments.

What your child uses to keep track of his assignments may vary, but some place special to write assignments is essential. A piece of paper has a tendency to get lost. Many students like writing their assignments in a folder in their notebook. Others use a special spiral notebook which is available in most drugstores. Whatever your child chooses, writing down assignments daily is an important step in completing the assignment.

When writing down the assignment, more explanation than just page 62 would be helpful. Perhaps having your child write the assignment in a way that even you could do it without any further directions will keep him from having questions about what he is to do once homework is started. Also, continuing to write the assignment down until it is turned in, will reinforce the need to continue working on the assignment.

Keep good research sources handy and encourage your children to read and investigate.

Dictionary: Give children a word to look up and learn each day. Use the word in conversation as often as you can. Ask them to look up words they misspelled or cannot pronounce.
Maps: Let your children navigate by using maps during trips around town. Plan the shortest route for a vacation.
Encyclopedia: Locate and read about countries mentioned in the news.
Almanac: Use this resource to collect facts and study history.

Arrange time to talk with your children.

Show an interest in their work and especially their achievements at school.
Applaud their accomplishments, but also let them know mistakes are human.
Help your children learn from mistakes.
The dinner table offers a good time for family discussion or current events, school lessons or friends.
Read and discuss items from the newspaper at breakfast.
Watch the night news together.
Put aside 15-30 minutes a night to work together on homework, a challenging game or bedtime reading.

Know some study methods.

It is common to hear students say, "I have read my assignment but do not remember what I have read." That may be happening because the reader has no plan to follow. Students are not likely to make that statement if they are in the habit of using a study plan when reading assignments.

By knowing the steps that improve understanding and remembering, you can help your son or daughter switch from a "read, daydream, forget" method to a "read, react, remember" method. Many study formulas have been written to make it easier for students to remember how to read an assignment. Two examples are:

SQ3R—Survey, Question, Read, Recite, Review
PQRST—Preview, Question, Read, State, Test

These study methods usually include some of the following steps:

- Page through the lesson and read all the headings, questions, and summaries. Look at pictures, maps, and graphs. This brief glance will give a general idea of the material.
- Set purposes for reading. Make questions out of the headings in the assignment. Read the questions written by the author or teachers. This will alert you to the important points. Go one step further and try to think of answers to the questions before starting to read. It is important to have something to look for!
- Read with an active mind. Look for answers to questions. Compare the answers you find to those you predicted before reading. The key is to keep your mind alert by having a silent conversation with the author—agree, ask, doubt, compare, and question.
- Look away from the assignment after each section. State the ideas in your own words.
- After reading the entire lesson, read each section heading and check your memory by trying to remember important facts and ideas. Review in the same way days and then weeks later. (Erickson, n.d.)

Set an example.

Now that we have the facts, material, assignment, time and place taken care of, you might check to see what you are doing during the study period.

Perhaps everyone in your family could take an hour in some kind of learning activity. Maybe it is time to read that book you have always wanted to read, or write letters, or engage in some other quiet activity.

For added importance and maybe even shock, take the phone off the hook.

Smaller children can also be aided in stretching their concentration on an activity that requires working by themselves. The earlier the habit is established the more likely it will continue.

Sharing newly-learned experiences after the hour would provide added reinforcement for all. After everyone has put in the effort, a reward for that hard work is in order. Perhaps a snack or TV program would best suit your family.

Parents can be a good role model by:

Using proper English and grammar when speaking or writing. Review your children's schoolwork and let them review letters you write.

Reading a variety of material like magazines, newspapers and books, and sharing them with your children.

(Adopted from McCrory, n.d.; American Federation of Teachers, 1984; and Erickson, n.d.)

USE TELEVISION WISELY

By grade one the average child has viewed 4,000 hours of television. The average student, upon completing high school, has viewed 15,000 hours of television and has spent more time in front of the TV set than in the classroom.

The use of television then needs to be carefully monitored. Too much television can rob your child of precious learning time at home.

If your children are on a heavy TV diet, cut back gradually. Cut back one hour the first week and so on. Have a weekly conference using the TV guide in the Sunday paper in which you and your children make selections for viewing. (Carney, 1984)

Select and prepare for the shows you want to watch each week. A special program on whales could be preceded by a book on these mammals of the sea, a trip to an aquarium or a model or drawing of the animal. Public broadcasting stations are good places to check program schedules. Discuss issues raised on TV. Encourage follow-up readings. Ask open-ended questions. And challenge your children to consider the bias in programming and the accuracy of news reporting. (Home Team Learning Activities, 1984)

EIGHT WAYS TO USE TV TO HELP YOUR CHILD

1. DON'T USE TV AS A BABY-SITTER. It may seem easier to place children in front of the television regardless of the quality of programming when you are busy around the house; but remember, children build strong family ties from their participation in household chores and shopping. Include them in these activities.

2. CAREFULLY SELECT THE SHOWS YOUR FAMILY WATCHES. Be the parent and insist that certain shows are off limits.

3. SET ASIDE A TIME FOR "FAMILY SHOWS," PROGRAMS YOU WATCH AND DISCUSS TOGETHER. When parents and children express views about the program's content and exchange ideas, family members gain insight about the program and each other.

4. INCLUDE CHILDREN IN FAMILY DECISIONS ABOUT WHAT YOU WILL WATCH TOGETHER. This shows children their ideas are respected and can set the stage for family meetings to discuss other family projects.

5. BE A MODEL FOR YOUR CHILD. Choose carefully the programs you watch.

6. DON'T USE TV AS A REWARD OR PUNISHMENT. As such, it can become a crutch which places too much value on the medium. Instead, try to think of something more directly tied to the child's behavior.

7. BE AS SELECTIVE WITH YOUR CHILD'S TV DIET AS YOU ARE WITH WHAT HE OR SHE EATS. Just as we are what we eat, to some extent, so too we are what we watch.

8. USE ACTIVITIES LIKE THE FOLLOWING TO ENHANCE THE LEARNING VALUE OF THE TV SHOWS YOU WATCH AS A FAMILY:

*Ask your child to exercise his/her imagination and think of another title for the program or series you are watching.

*Read newspaper articles together describing the show before watching it.

Have your child write a description or narration of the program after viewing it.

*During a commercial break ask your child to predict what will happen next.

*Turn off the volume but leave the picture on. Ask your child to guess what is happening by watching the action without the sound. (Angle, 1985)

*Ask your child to describe favorite TV characters using a variety of different words. This stimulates the use of a rich vocabulary and lets you know the types of qualities your child relates to.

*Prepare a monthly calendar with symbols such as a sun for outdoor activity and a book for reading. Each time your child engages in a daily free time activity, encourage him/her to paste a symbol on the correct calendar date. This will give you an idea of how your child spends his/her free time. It also encourages a varied schedule.

*As your youngster watches commercials on television, ask him/her to think of similar products and to make up catchy slogans for them, or invent a product and write an ad for it.

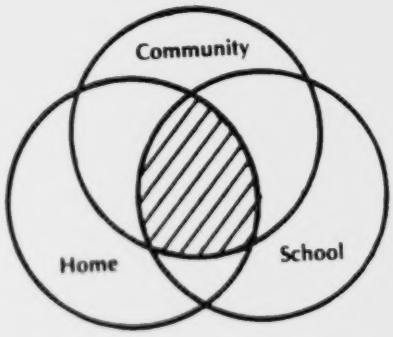
*Have your child name eight-ten of his/her favorite shows. Ask your child to put them into categories such as family shows, cartoons, situation comedies, science fiction, or news and information. If you find the selection is not varied enough, you might suggest a few others that would broaden experiences.

*Have your child keep a weekly TV log and write down five unfamiliar words heard or seen each week. Encourage your child to look up the meanings of these words in the dictionary or talk about them with you.

*Devise a rating scale from one to five. Ask your child to give a number to a certain TV program and to explain why such a rating was given.

*Ask each child in your family to pick a different color. Using the TV Guide, have each child use this color to circle one TV program that he or she wants to watch each day. Alternate who gets first choice. This serves two purposes: it limits the amount of time watching television; and it encourages discriminating viewing.

(Criscuolo, n.d.)

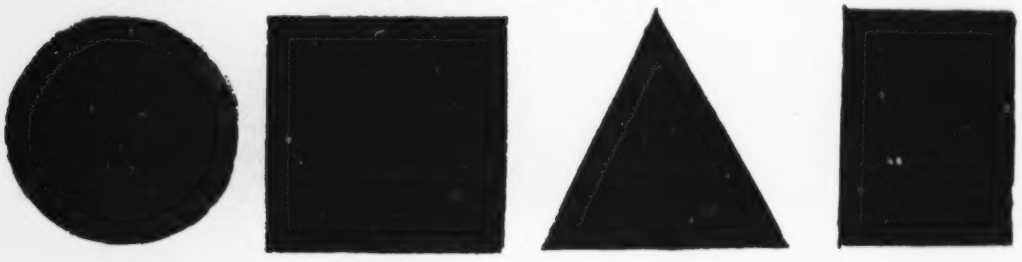


USE NEWSPAPERS AND MAGAZINES

A wealth of teaching materials is usually found in each home and discarded daily. Let's put newspapers and magazines to additional use and help our children learn!

1. Reading
   a. Pictures—Share the pictures with your children, beginning at a very early age.
      - Begin with a simple picture and pronounce boy if that is what it is.
      - Discuss what is shown in the picture as the child progresses. Later, let him tell you what he sees in the picture. This should progress from one-word answers until he is using sentences to express what he sees.

   b. Basic Shapes—Let the child find as many of the basic shapes as she can in the pictures (circles, squares, rectangles, triangles). Cut them out, paste on a sheet of paper and print their names beside each one.



   c. Letter Classification—
      - Cut letters from the headlines and let your child identify them, place them in sequence, and read the alphabet. (These may be kept in an envelope or folder for further use.)
      - Later the child may tell the sound as well as the name.
      - This activity may also lead into the same activity using the small, or lower case, letters.
      - The letters may also be used to spell out words as the child advances.

   d. Animal Classification—
      - Cut out pictures of animals. Help the child to recognize and classify them.
      - Discuss where they would be found.
      - Label some boxes or envelopes for the child to sort the pictures into:
        found on farm
        found in zoo
        found in woods
        used for pets
        (Kelley, n.d.)

   e. News Monster—Using today's newspaper, have your child take a red crayon and circle all the letter A's he can find on the front page. With a green crayon, circle all the letter T's. Use orange for the letter O's. Now take a black crayon and connect all the circles to form a newspaper monster. Give it a name at the bottom of the page.

f. Word Busters—Ask your child to find, cut out and paste to a sheet of paper from your newspaper:
   - A word with a suffix. Underline the root word.
   - Two words beginning with the consonant "t."
   - Three words with a short "a" sound.
   - A word with a prefix. Underline the root word.
   - An adjective from a headline. Write at least two synonyms for it.

g. Sizzling Sentences—Summertime brings fun things to do. Have your child cut words from your newspaper to finish these sentences about summer fun.
   - I like to eat _____
   - I can wear _____
   - My friend and I can _____
   - Next week I will _____
   - My dad likes to _____

("Newspapers in Education," 1986)

2. Creative Writing—
   a. Choose a picture and ask your child to write a few sentences about what it tells. This could advance until he can write a whole story as if he were a reporter.

   b. Choose a story. Remove the ending. Ask the child to write how she thinks the story ended. Compare what she has written with the real story.

   c. Ask your child to choose a front page. Have him read a headline that interests him. Ask him to write his own headline for the story. Ask him to tell what happened in sequence in the story as if he were there. 1st, 2nd, etc.

   d. Discover the difference between fact fantasy, and opinion. Help your child discover the difference between a fact, a fantasy, and an opinion.
   (A fact is information that is true. A fantasy is an imagined fancy. An opinion is what someone thinks.)

   Read articles aloud together. Discuss if they are fact or fantasy. Why is it not true or false, etc. Then ask the child to rewrite it to be what it is not.

   e. Find an article in a magazine or newspaper. Read the article to your child. Discuss the facts and opinions presented. Discuss why they are facts or opinions of the writer.

   f. Find another article. Ask your child to draw one line under the facts in the article and circle the opinions.

   g. Ask your child to practice rewriting articles and change opinions to facts and express own opinions.
   (Kelley, n.d.)

   h. Crazy Ads—Have your child look at the classified ads, then write one of his own in which he tries to "sell" a chore that he doesn't like. Hint: the ad must be positive to attract a buyer.

i. Pet Parade—Ask your child to find a pet for sale in the classified ads. Have her pretend she is that animal and write a short paragraph telling how she feels about going to a new home. What will the home be like? What kind of food does she like? Does she like children?

j. News Sleuth—Get out 5 colored markers or crayons and today's newspaper. Have your child analyze a story from the front page, using the five w's that reporters include in their news stories: who, what, when where and why. Circle each "w" in a different color as it appears in the story. Now cut out the story and paste it to a sheet of paper.
("Newspaper in Education," 1986.)

3. Mathematics

a Use the For—Sale—Ads—Examine the for-sale pages. Discuss how you find the store where the best buys can be found.

- Plan a menu. Pretend you have $10.00 to spend for dinner for four. Let your child do selective buying for a balanced meal. When he is ready, let him do the buying.
- Cut out numerals. Place in envelopes. Let your preschooler learn to recognize and read them. Later, use them for him to place in sequence. (They may be pasted on construction paper or cardboard so they will last longer and stand out.)
- Cut out pictures of cans of food or other items. Let your preschooler count the pictures and place the correct numerals beside it. Let him sort numerals and arrange in rows going from left to right.

b. Ask your child to read the grocery ads.

- Ask her to then find words in the newspaper that describe items she sees in the ads:

bread
Clorox
soap
broom
milk

- Ask her to write the adjectives by the item. She might be challenged to add to the list each day for a week as a contest to see how many she can possibly find. (Kelley, n.d.)

c. Words' Worth—Ask a child to make a code by giving a money value to each letter of the alphabet. Then have another child turn to the front page of today's newspaper and choose the names of at least five countries mentioned. Use the code to add up the value of each country's name. What is the total value of the 5 countries? What is the average value.

d. Three-to-go—Ask your child to circle any 10 numbers in today's newspaper. Write them on a piece of paper. Next to each number, write the numbers that come just before and just after it.

4. Health

a. Nutrition Nut—Get three paper plates, one for each meal of the day. Using the food ads, ask your child to cut out pictures and names of food which would be good for him. Paste the pictures on the proper plates.

5. Science
   a. Mad Scientist—Ask your child to fold a large piece of colored paper into three sections. Label the columns "animal", "mineral" and "vegetable". Tell your child to cut out pictures from the newspaper that fit these categories. Try to find four of each. Past them into the proper columns.

   b. Weather Vane—The weather page of the newspaper contains a great deal of information. Ask your child to find:
      - the hottest place in the United States yesterday
      - the temperature forecast for your city tomorrow
      - the coldest place in the United States yesterday
      - the temperature for Paris yesterday.

6. Social Studies
   a. Cartoonery—Have your child cut out a political cartoon from the editorial section and attach it to a piece of paper. Ask him to write a paragraph describing the situation in the news that caused the cartoon to be drawn. (Newspapers in Education, 1986.)

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"Eating Well Can Help Your Child Learn Better"
"Good Books Make Reading Fun For Your Child"
"Studying: A Key To Success. . .Ways Parents Can Help"
"Summer Reading Is Important"
"You Can Encourage Your Child to Read"
"You Can Help Your Child In Reading By Using The Newspaper"
"You Can Use Television To Stimulate Your Child's Reading Habits"
"Your Home Is Your Child's First School"
"You Can Prepare Your Child For Reading Tests"

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